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TAGS: [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [OIIP](#) [CE](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA PLAY: (JUNE 12) TOKYO CONFERENCE

1. Summary. Sri Lankan media coverage of the Tokyo Donor Conference and its implications lessened somewhat, but was still energetic. Tamil newspapers' lead headlines concentrated on the LTTE rejection of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's suggested interim administration for the north and east. Tamil editorial commentary was robust. While pro-LTTE SUDAR OLI's editorial quoted an LTTE Eastern politico's comments about the need to "regroup" Tamil forces, other editorials focused on government cooperation with the Tigers. Guarded optimism was the order of the day for government-owned media. The Tigers' rejection of an interim administration was the big story in opposition and independent media. End summary.

2. LTTE statements and other Tamil reaction.

Tamil newspapers' lead headlines concentrated on the LTTE rejection of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's suggested interim administration for the north and east. Pro-LTTE daily, SUDAR OLI reported, "Tigers reject the provisional administrative structure proposed by Prime Minister at the Tokyo Conference - Need the interim administrative structure to resume talks" - Official statement by LTTE issued from Kilinochchi HQ." This headline was closely echoed by independent dailies VIRAKESARI and THINAKKURAL. State-owned THINAKARAN downplayed its story, "Tigers demand submission of the draft framework of the interim administrative structure," by placing it low on its front page.

The primary source for these stories was likely Pro-LTTE TamilNet's web headline, "LTTE insists on draft framework for interim administration to resume talks."

Block quote.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in an official statement issued from its headquarters in Kilinochchi, northern Sri Lanka Wednesday reiterated its position that it would participate in the negotiating process only when the Sri Lankan government puts forward a clearly defined draft framework for an interim administrative structure for the Northeast.

End block quote.

Tamil newspapers also reported on Deputy Minister of Finance Bandula Gunawardena's remarks. Independent daily THINAKKURAL quoted him, "There won't be an immediate effect on the economy by the assistance assured in Tokyo," and, "Separate administrative structure for proper utilization of the assistance received at the Tokyo Conference," in state-owned THINAKARAN.

Tamil editorial commentary was robust. While pro-LTTE SUDAR OLI's editorial quoted an LTTE Eastern politico comments about the need to "regroup" Tamil forces, other editorials focused on government cooperation with the Tigers.

--- Pro-LTTE SUDAR OLI's editorial headline, "Can we reach the target under present circumstances?" referred to a peaceful Sri Lanka, but its core message was about the threat presidential control of the armed forces poses to the peace process, "Without a structure to control the [armed] forces, the Prime Minister will not be able to reach his target, however much he may be committed to peace."

Block quotes.

Commitment of the international community for peace and its assistance has allowed Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe to continue the peace process with new energy. His United National Party has not got an absolute majority in the parliament.

President Chandrika Kumaratunge, the leader of the opposition party, knows the weakness of the government, which she uses to her benefit. She is taming the government and showing her executive powers as the

president with threat of dissolution of parliament. The JVP and other racist groups are rousing her.

There's wide accusation that the President manipulates a section of the [armed] forces, as the head of the [armed] forces, to discredit the government and to disrupt the peace efforts.

E. Kausalyan, LTTE political leader in Batticaloa/Ampara Districts condemned the actions of the [armed] forces in a meeting that took place at the Divisional Secretariat in Aalaiyady Vembu in the East on June 10. There he said:

`We are taking steps to rebuild good relations between Tamils and Muslims, forgetting the sour experiences of the war situation, which created division in the longstanding relationship we have been enjoying for a very long time.

`Certain actions of the government forces are disturbing. On June 4, One of our fighters was arrested in the Batticaloa District in connection with a murder for which he was innocent and had no connection whatsoever. This happened because of the mistake of the police.

`The forces are trying to drag us into the war when we are committed to peace. When considering all these, it is evident that we need to regroup our Tamil forces. The atrocities of the [armed] forces are growing day after day. They seem to be working against peace.

`We are ones to stop the war. We are aware of the effects of the war. We are not for war again,' he said.

Without a structure to control the forces, the Prime Minister will not be able to reach his target, however much he may be committed to peace.

End block quotes.

--- Under the headline, "Tokyo declaration," independent daily, VIRAKESARI commented, "What Sri Lanka has is an ethnic problem and the international community has accepted that in finding solution to the problem, Tiger involvement is very essential."

Block quotes.

Many participating countries expressed their concern over LTTE boycott. Those countries pointed out that the LTTE should not be betrayed, but this opportunity has been afforded to resume talks with them and continue with the peace efforts.

The request of the donor countries and the declaration on the final day of the conference clearly show that the country's ethnic problem should be solved through a suitable political solution to attain lasting peace.

From time to time, the Opposition parties and the racists try to argue that the problem in Sri Lanka is not ethnic but terrorist. What Sri Lanka has is an ethnic problem and the international community has accepted that in finding solution to the problem, Tiger involvement is very essential.

President's party has repeatedly stated that the assistance was not aid but loan. She has appointed a 7 member committee to study the speeches delivered by the Prime Minister at the Tokyo Conference. PA has accused that 90% of the assistance comes as loans and every citizen of this country would become a debtor by a further sum of Rs 22,000 each.

From the day of Independence country has been depending on foreign loans. Today the country has almost lost its independence through dependence. When we fail to solve our problems amicably, they turn out to be international problems, and their assistance becomes necessary.

End block quotes.

--- Under the headline, "Hereafter, we should straighten up peaceful politics," independent daily, THINAKKURAL observed, "Resumption of talks and leading the country to a lasting peace lie in the firmness of the Prime Minister in carrying out his promises and the support of the LTTE."

Block quotes.

Likewise, Japanese Special Envoy Yasusi Akashi will travel to London to meet LTTE Theoretician Anton Balasingham. In brief, the international community is not just interested, but has taken a stern stand that the peace efforts should continue on the correct path.

The assistance provided by the International Community should hasten the resumption of talks. The PA is in their original stand opposing the efforts of the Prime Minister. They accuse that this assistance has driven the country further into debt.

When the country is to be regained and efforts are being taken to solve the basic problems of this country through the assistance of the international community, what the opposition is trying is not acceptable.

Resumption of talks and leading the country to lasting a peace lie in the firmness of the Prime Minister in carrying out his promises and the support of the LTTE.

End block quotes.

--- Under the headline, "Great victory for Sri Lanka in Japan," state-owned daily THINAKARAN commented, "The racists should know their efforts to disrupt the peace process initiated by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran will not succeed because the majority of the people are for peace."

Block quotes.

The Prime Minister in his address clearly stated the necessity of a provisional administrative structure, something very similar to the interim administrative structure demanded by the LTTE. It is very clear that no development could be done in the NE without the participation of the Tigers. There's no argument regarding Tigers handling the assistance provided by the international community as the administration in the NE is under the LTTE.

The political parties that boast of representing the people of the South and the Sinhalese people were dumb founded about the flood victims until the Tigers came from the north with flood relief. Such racist parties should learn from the Liberation Tigers regarding humanitarian services. The racists should know their efforts to disrupt the peace process initiated by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran will not succeed because the majority of the people are for peace.

The aid received in the Tokyo Conference would be spent in war-affected areas in NE. As there's peoples' support to these leaders, there's no doubt that their efforts would succeed.

End block quotes.

13. GSL statements and pro-government reaction.

Guarded optimism was the order of the day for government-owned media. Although state-owned television and radio stations carried stories about the LTTE's rejection of the Prime Minister's interim authority for the north and east, newspapers downplayed it. State-owned English DAILY NEWS' lead headline trumpeted, "Foreign funds will accelerate socio-economic recovery - PM, and relegated "LTTE insists on draft framework for interim administration to resume talks," to the bottom of its front page. State-owned Sinhala sister DINAMINA reported, "When GSL officially announces decisions on the Tokyo conference, [LTTE] shall respond"-says LTTE," and favorably covered the investor's conference immediately following Tokyo, "Japan bank coordinated conference gets overwhelming attendance of investors - result of the success of the confab."

--- Under the editorial headline, "Defining the looming challenges," state-owned English DAILY NEWS acknowledged, "The LTTE. has been fighting for power. A challenge for the future for the Lankan polity is to balance these conflicting demands in. an innovative administrative structure for the North-East."

Block quotes.

With the landmark Tokyo aid donors' conference ending on a clear note of triumph for Sri Lanka, the subsequent and more arduous phases of "Regaining Sri Lanka" have now begun.

That is, to make concrete, verifiable and substantial progress in resolving our conflict by political means. That is, the peace process must be resumed with the participation of the LTTE and taken to its logical conclusion.

However, before further efforts are made to re-involve the LTTE in the peace process, some stark facts need to be recognized. Prime among these is the need to ensure a substantial role for the LTTE in the refashioned administrative structure for the development of the North-East. The LTTE, it needs to be realised, has been fighting for power.

A challenge for the future for the Lankan polity is to balance these conflicting demands in, indeed, an innovative

administrative structure for the North-East. Some of the standards, which the parties to the peace process would need to conform to in the socio-economic sphere have been outlined by US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage. These are fairness, transparency and accountability. Accordingly, the creative potential of the people needs to be tapped in the development exercise. They need to be encouraged to play an active and creative role in their deliverance from poverty. They need to be conscientized into believing that they are dynamic agents in their struggle against poverty, rather than being mere, passive, recipients of aid. The latter leads to self-destructive dependence.

End block quotes.

4. Opposition statements and pro-opposition reaction.

The Tigers' rejection of the Prime Minister's interim administration was the big story in opposition newspaper headlines. Independent, but nationalist-leaning, English daily ISLAND blared, "Tigers reject Ranil's latest offer made in Tokyo," on its front page. Stirring the sensibilities of its southern base, the ISLAND added, "Tokyo Declaration ignores those disabled outside N-E," and "Transparency, accountability a must in proposed development mechanism of NE." Sister paper Sinhala daily DIVAINA was calmer, and reported, "LTTE officially announces- if a clear draft of the interim administration is done, they will return to peace talks."

--- Under the headline, "After the Tokyo Conference," independent, but nationalist-leaning, English daily ISLAND commented, ".it appears that the moment of truth arrived for the LTTE when they realised that at Tokyo they would have to commit themselves to democracy and human rights - all of which are extremely destructive to an organisation that is bound together and driven forward by sheer forces of terror."

Block quotes.

It was only on Tuesday night when two LTTE cadres were stopped by the police on Galle Road Wellawattte that one of them swallowed a cyanide capsule. Do organisations committed to peace and human rights get their cadres to take cyanide capsules?

It does appear that the moment of truth arrived for the LTTE when they realised that at Tokyo they would have to commit themselves to democracy and human rights - all of which are extremely destructive to an organisation that is bound together and driven forward by sheer forces of terror.

While the Conference is supposed to have been on 'regaining' entire Sri Lanka, it does appear that in certain aspects, the South and the people of the South, appear to be forgotten.

With the LTTE boycott and the successful Tokyo Conference, an entirely new game has commenced. The government, if it caves into LTTE demands as before, will be kicking into its own goal, once again.

End block quotes.

5. Independent media reaction

Independent television and radio carried the LTTE rejection of an interim administration in English and vernacular broadcasts. Independent English DAILY MIRROR reserved their lead story for, "New economic tie-up with Japan - PM thrilled by Tokyo vote of confidence in Sri Lanka's potential," and also reported, "Tokyo Declaration in no way is binding on us -Tigers." Independent Sinhala daily LANKADEEPA headlined, "No interim administration draft, no talks; LTTE rejects GSL's latest proposal," and quoted leader of the LTTE's political wing, Tamilchelvan, "GSL commitment on an interim admin is adequate to initiate talks."

English and Sinhala independent editorialists were silent.

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